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ART NEEDLEWORK

NOTES ON TAPESTRY.



EMBROIDERED BAND.
SWEDISH MOTIVE.

TAPESTRY is neither true embroidery nor real weaving, but in a manner unites in its working those two processes into one. Though wrought in a loom and upon a warp stretched out along its frame, it has no woof thrown across those threads with a shuttle or any like appliance, but its weft is done with many short threads, all variously colored and put in by a needle. It is not embroidery, though so very like it, for tapestry is not worked on what is really a web, having both warp and woof, but upon a series of closely set fine strings.

From Egypt through Western Asia the art of tapestry-making found its way to Europe, and after many ages at last to England. Among the other manual labors followed in religious houses this handicraft was one; and monks became some of the best workmen. The altars and the walls of their churches

were hung with tapestry. Matthew Paris tells us that among other ornaments which, in the reign of Henry the First, Abbot Geoffrey had made for his church of St. Alban's were three reredoses; the first a large one wrought with the finding of the body of St. Alban; the other two figured with the parables of the man who fell among thieves, and of the prodigal son.

We may collect from Chaucer that working tapestry was not an uncommon trade; among his pilgrims he mentions in the prologue,

"An haberdasher and a carpenter,
A webbe, a dyer, and a tapisser."

Pieces of English-made tapestry still remain. A fine though greatly damaged specimen at St. Mary's Hall, Coventry, representing the marriage of Henry the Sixth, is one; a second is a curious reredos for an altar, figured with St. Martin on horseback cutting his cloak in two that he might give one half to a poor man, and with St. Dunstan singing mass. A third piece is one of four (of which two have been lost), representing the marriage of Henry the Seventh and Elizabeth of York, and was probably made about the year 1490.

The art of weaving tapestry was successfully followed in many parts of France and throughout ancient Flanders, where secular trade-guilds were formed for its especial manufacture in many of the towns. Several of these places won for themselves an especial

fame; but so far, at last, did Arras outrun them all that arras-work came to be the common word to mean all sorts of tapestry, whether wrought in England or elsewhere. Arras is but one among other terms by which, during the middle ages, tapestry was called. Its earliest name was Saracenic work—"opus Saracenicum;" and, at first, tapestry was wrought as in the East, in a low or horizontal loom. The artisans of France and Flanders were the first to introduce the upright or ver-

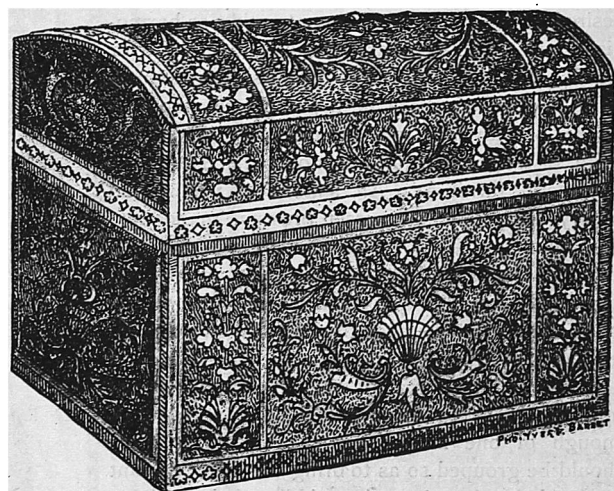
tical frame, afterward known abroad as "de haute lisse," in contradistinction to the low or horizontal frame called "de basse lisse." Workmen who kept to the unimproved loom were known, in the trade, as Saracens, for retaining the method of their paynim teachers; and their work, Saracenic. In the year 1339 John de Croisettes, a Saracen tapestry-worker living at Arras, sold to the Duke of Touraine a piece of gold Saracenic tapestry figured with the story of Charlemagne. The high frame, however, soon superseded the low one; and among the pieces of tapestry belonging to Philippe Duke of Burgogne and Brabant many are especially entered as of the high frame.

With the upright as with the flat frame, the workman had to grope in the dark a great deal upon his path. In both he was obliged to put in the threads on the back or wrong side of the piece, following his sketch as best he could behind the strings or warp. As the face was downward in the flat frame it was much less easy to observe and correct a fault. In the upright frame he might go in front, and with his own work in open view on one hand and the original design full before him on the other, he could mend as he went on, step by step, the smallest mistake, were it but a single thread. Put side by side, when finished, the pieces from the upright frame were in beauty and perfection far beyond those from the flat one. We can scarcely particularize the details in which that superiority consisted, for not one single flat sample is to be identified as certain from evidence within modern reach.

When the illuminators of manuscripts began to put in golden shadings all over their painting the tapestry-workers did the same. Such a manner cannot be relied on as a criterion whereby to judge of the exact place where any specimen of tapestry has been wrought, or to tell its precise age. To work figures on a golden

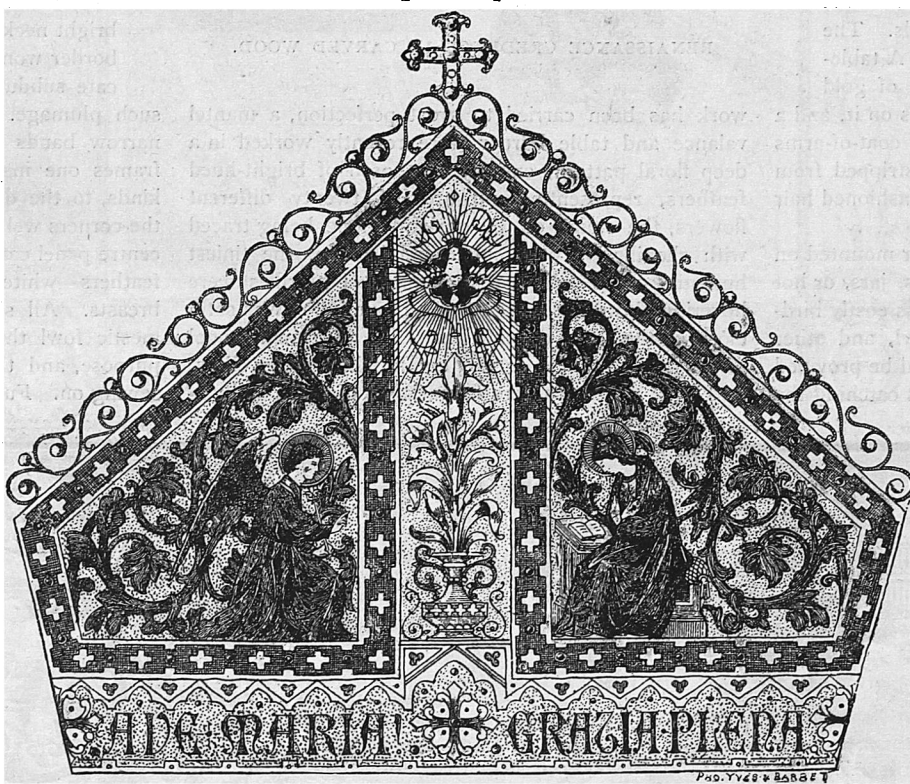
of the Spanish Armada. This magnificent memorial was destroyed in the fire of 1834. One fragment only is known to exist. This piece was cut out to make way for a gallery at the time of the trial of Queen Caroline, and was secreted by a German servant of the Lord Chamberlain. The relic was bought some years after for 20*l.* and presented to the corporation of Plymouth.

The most beautiful series now in the world is in the Vatican at Rome. Duke Cosimo tried to set up tapes-



EMBROIDERED COFFER. EXHIBITED AT THE PARIS EXPOSITION.

try work at Florence, but did not succeed. Later, Rome produced some good things; among others, the fine copy of Da Vinci's Last Supper still hung up on Maunday Thursday. England made several attempts to reintroduce the manufacture: first at Mortlake, afterward in London at Soho. Works from these two establishments may be met with. At Northumberland House there was a room hung with large pieces of tapestry wrought at Soho, and for that mansion, in the year 1758. The designs were by Francesco Zuccherelli, and consisted of landscapes composed of hills crowned here and there with the standing ruins of temples or strewn with broken columns, among which groups of country folks are wandering and amusing themselves. Mortlake and Soho were failures. Not so the Gobelins at Paris, as every one well knows; and the work produced by modern artisans there is in no way inferior to that which has made the name historical. The beautiful piece of Gobelins tapestry illustrated herewith was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. The exquisite central figure represents the "Goddess of the Silver Bow" scattering rays of light.



EMBROIDERED MITRE. EXHIBITED AT THE PARIS EXPOSITION.

ground and to shade garments, buildings, and landscapes with gold, are two different things.

The use of tapestry for church decoration and household furniture was for a long period very great. Many large pieces, mostly of a scriptural character, were provided by Cardinal Wolsey for his palace at Hampton Court. In the next generation, a very famous set was made in Flanders, which for many years decorated the walls of the House of Lords: it represented the defeat

and the ground slightly darned in dim yellow crewel. With due care this will keep clean for a very long time, and when soiled may be cleaned again and again; it is an elaborate but very pleasant and repaying piece of work. It should be noticed that the effect much depends on the darning of the ground; if the flowers be another color than yellow, say red-pink, or blue, the darning may be the same color, but perhaps of a lighter shade.

QUILTS AND COVERLETS.

VERY effective quilts are made in applied work on unbleached cotton sheeting. A pattern of yellow fruit or flowers with leaves is cut out in colored serges, sewn on with crewels in button-hole stitch, stems, veins and buds being also worked in crewels,

For a modern embroidered coverlet there is no better plan than the ornamenting of a linen sheet, of the best quality of linen that can be procured, either plain or twilled, but not very fine, as the stouter kinds take embroidery better. This may be worked in crewels in a great variety of ways; one is to divide the quilt into spaces, squares, and oblongs, with perhaps a larger space in the middle, and to work in them sprays of flowers adapted to the rectangular shapes, and conventionalized slightly and in the same degree; several examples of such treatment of flowers will be found in the illustrations. The dividing lines must be worked with reference to the color of the whole. If the flowers be very varied in color, green will be the best for the lines, which must not be too thin; a close herring-bone stitch makes them very well. If the flowers have a prevailing tint, which makes a very pretty coverlet, that color may be introduced in the dividing lines; a line of it between two lines of green makes a good division. A quilt of this kind was lately designed with flowers of the four seasons. The centre is left in a plain oblong, and the deep border is divided into sections, two at each side, and three at each end. Roses and sunflowers are on one side, representing summer, the corresponding two for autumn being brambles and oranges; at the ends, apple blossom is between two irises for spring; and for winter, holly between two branches of mistletoe. The choice of the flowers was made so as to keep the color within due bounds and agreement, and the treatment is large and bold. Much more fanciful and elaborate work than this is done for quilts in crewels on linen. One was seen recently on which sunflowers and poppies, peacocks and owls, the rising sun, the moon and stars, with other appropriate suggestions of day and night, labor and rest, were composed into a beautiful design, and bordered with verses from a morning and an evening hymn.

Bolton sheeting is a coarse twilled cotton fabric, seventy-two inches wide, of a beautiful soft creamy color, which improves much in washing. It is inexpensive, and an excellent ground for embroidery, either for curtains, counterpanes, chair-coverings, or for ladies' dresses, or tennis aprons. It resembles the twilled cotton on which so much of the old crewel embroidery was worked in the seventeenth century, and is one of the most satisfactory materials when of really good quality.

ARACHNE AND MINERVA.

OF course our readers all know the story of the unfortunate Arachne, who was so accomplished in working with the needle that she actually challenged to a trial of skill Minerva herself, and, being defeated, committed suicide. The goddess, it will be remembered, changed her into a spider, and as that insect we still see Arachne spinning her thread, though without the gorgeous colors that made so wondrous the work that incited her punishment by Minerva.

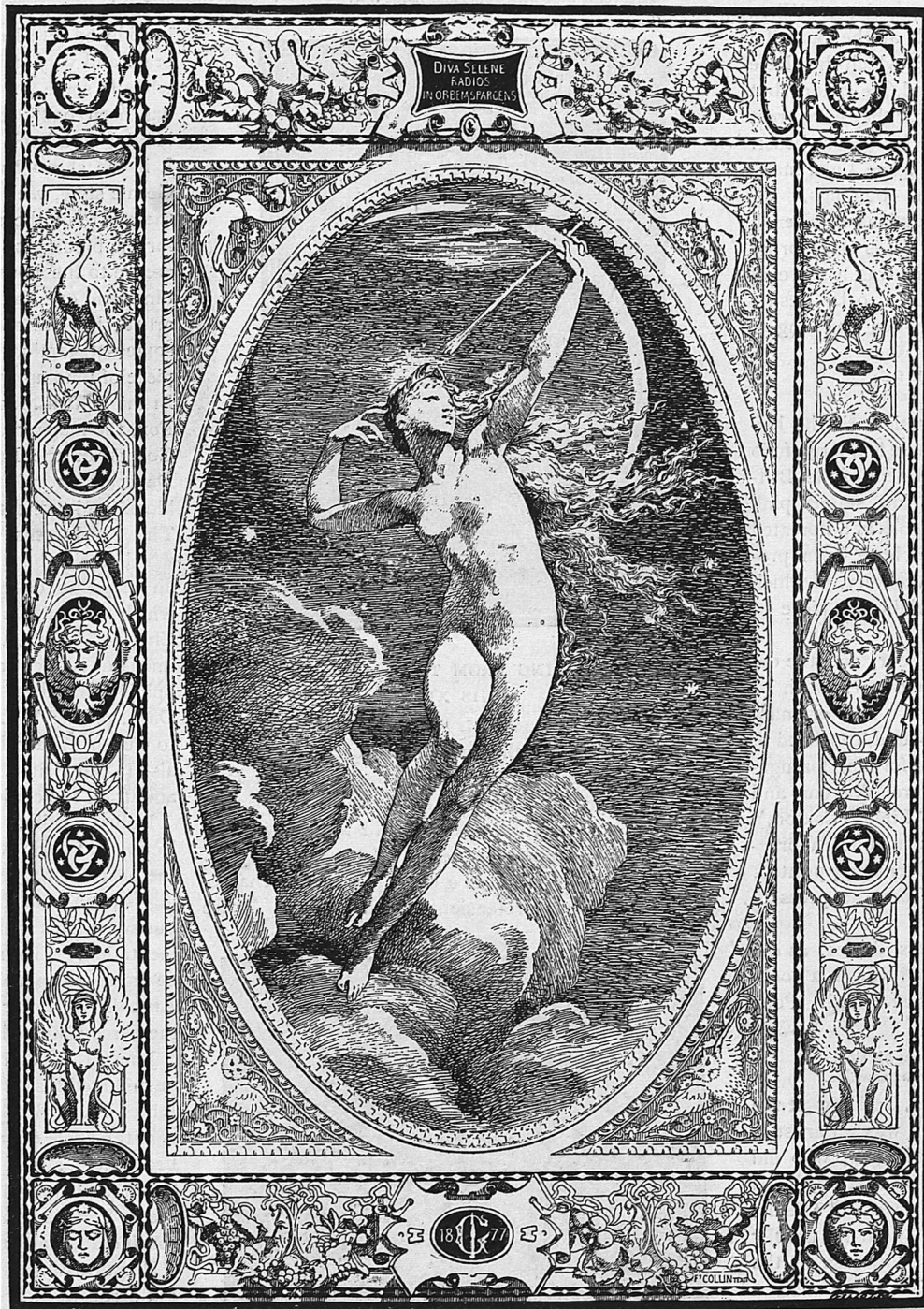
Arachne represented, among other subjects on her work, the story of Jupiter and Europa. Spenser, in one of his poems, describes the competition, and as his description gives a good idea of the style of work that the ladies in England in the sixteenth century executed for wall-hangings, we give a few passages of his elaborate verse:

"Before the bull she pictured winged Love
With his young brother Sport, light fluttering
Upon the waves, as each had been a dove;
* * * * *
And many nymphs about them flocking round,
And many Tritons with their horns did sound.

And, round about, her work she did impale
With a fair border wrought of sundry flowers,
Inwoven with an ivy-winding trail—
A goodly work, full fit for kingly bowers."

Minerva seems to have entered fully into the spirit of the competition. For her theme we are told she chose

"the story of the old debate
Which she with Neptune did for Athens try:
Twelve gods do sit around in royal state,
And Jove in midst with awful majesty
To judge the strife between them stirred late.
* * * * *



GOBELINS TAPESTRY. EXHIBITED AT THE PARIS EXPOSITION OF 1878.

DESIGNED BY MAILLART AND DURAND.

Before them stands the god of seas in place,
Claiming that seacoast city as his right,
And strikes the rock with his three-forked mace,
Whenceforth issues a warlike steed in sight,
The sign by which he challenges the place.
* * * * *
Then she set forth how with her weapon dread
She smote the ground, the which straightforth did yield
A fruitful olive-tree, with berries spread,
That all the gods admired; then all the story
She compassed with a wreath of olives hoary.

Amongst these leaves she made a butterfly,
With excellent device and wondrous sleight,
Fluttering among the olives wantonly,
That seemed to live, so like it was in sight—
The velvet nap which on his wings doth lie,
The silken down with which his back is dight,
His broad outstretched horns, his hairy thighs,
His glorious colors, and his glistening eyes."

THE originality of the Swedish border on the opposite page makes us wish we knew more of this people's needlework.

PERSIAN NEEDLEWORK.

EVEN in Persia fashions change. Ladies there used to wear loose trousers the groundwork of which was entirely covered and hidden by elaborate needlework in silk or wool. At the present day the style inclines to geometric designs worked in white thread on a white ground of cambric or calico. These are chiefly employed to embellish the edges and net work visières of ladies' veils. A peculiar kind of embroidery and patchwork combined is largely made at Resht, and to some extent at Ispahan. It consists of a patchwork of minute pieces of broadcloth of different colors, the seams and some other portions of which are then covered with needlework also variously colored, the whole forming a combination of geometric and floral ornamentation. The colors being of the brightest, the general effect is gaudy. These "Gul Luzi i Reshti," as they are called, are mostly used by the Persians for saddle-cloths and showy horse clothing, for which they are not inappropriate. They have been introduced into this country for table, sofa, and chair covers, as examples of Persian art needlework; but we need hardly say that for such purposes they are quite unsuited, and that they are the very reverse of artistic.

CHURCH BANNERS.

"PENELOPE," referring to the designs for church decoration published in our last December number, asks how such worked banners as are shown in the supplement are made. There are various ways: Those embroidered by hand, when well designed, and executed by one skilled in church needlework, are of course the most beautiful, as the variety both of materials and designs at command is almost unlimited. The handsomest are those embroidered on silk, while cloth, bunting, or other material is available for less expensive decorations.

For temporary purposes, however, it is not often thought desirable to spend so much time or money on the banners as embroidery usually involves, so that where worked banners are adopted they are more frequently made in appliqué work; thus, supposing it is proposed to make a crimson banner with a white cross or monogram surrounded with four gold stars, and having a short text such as "Alleluia," the ground-work could be of crimson cloth, the cross or monogram of gold-colored cotton velvet, and the text of white cotton

velvet; and when the ornament is fixed on the ground-work it may be edged with black or colored cord, or tracing braid, as previously suggested; and the material then taken out of the frame, cut to the shape decided upon, and made up with a hem at the top for the cross-pole to pass through, and an edging of cord or fringe.

OUR correspondent, Mrs. F. B., is informed that "French Plumetis" is the same as satin-stitch, chiefly used in white embroidery. It consists in taking the needle each time back again almost to the spot from which it started, so that the same amount of crewel or silk remains on the back of the work as on the front. This produces a surface as smooth as satin: hence its name. It is chiefly used in working the petals of small flowers, such as "forget-me-nots," and in arabesque designs where a raised effect is wanted in small masses.